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—An Exchange of Views

THE

Commonweal

Television's Double Image

by Edward T. Chase

Portrait of Ahmad

by James Kritzeck

Marxist Literary Critics

by Michael Harrington

A STRANGE, ROMANTIC NOVELLA . . . . . by Geoffrey Wagner
ON CHRISTIAN HOPE . . . . . by Leonard F. X. Mayhew
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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

DO PEOPLE get the kind of government they deserve? To say that they do is cynical and harsh, perhaps, but it is a judgment all too easily supported. The will of the people, as it is revealed in American life today, seems directed almost wholly to the pursuit of easy living, glamour and frivolity. Popular tastes and popular heroes—in the arts, in social life, in politics—suggest an American ethos sunk to depths of selfishness and self-indulgence.

It seems inevitable that a society which insists on self-deception and self-flattery, even as it yields to the easy and gratifying, should choose leaders as it chooses anything else. If public life today is marked by the creation of synthetic "personalities," the purveying of appealing political "images," the evasion of genuine issues in favor of "box-office" positions, isn't all this the natural political response to the conditions of our society? If our governmental officers reveal themselves to be short-sighted and complacent, uninterested in the grand vision—not to mention the grand effort which must accompany it—isn't this, too, only the inevitable, granted the state of the culture we live in? In short, isn't it true that people do indeed get the kind of government they deserve?

We would say no, despite the weight of these arguments. Or at least, we would say, this proposition is true only in a sense, and that not the most important sense. Whatever indictment one makes of our contemporary culture, and this can be searing indeed, it must be remembered that the catalog is only of faults, weaknesses, corruptions. Man is a weak creature, prone to error of every kind, but he is not encompassed by his errors and weaknesses. There is more to him than his failings, and he deserves to be dealt with in terms of his total nature. He deserves to be dealt with in accordance with the best in him, no matter how obscured and submerged this may be by the worst in him.

SO IT IS with society; so it is with the people of a democratic state. And this leads to the continuing problem of leadership in a political democracy. The people of a democracy need leaders whose vision is higher and longer than that of the society at large. In the main, the citizens of any state incline to what is easy and comfortable; more often than not they will tend toward the selfish and short-sighted. And yet their leaders must be more than mere reflections of popular desire. This is not to say that the true democratic leader departs from the will of the people; rather, he opens their eyes and lifts their hearts in recognition of the purposes and values they have forgotten or neglected or simply been ignorant of.

There is of course great danger in the process of leading the people in the direction which one man or a minority believes is best for them. We think immediately of the Fascist and Nazi regimes, which imposed on the people, by force, their "true" will. Most of all, perhaps, we think of the mystique of Communism and "people's democracy." And even in a functioning democracy this concept of leadership opens the possibility of cynical contempt for the people and the assumption of righteousness in determining what is truly the people's will. There are, we know, false prophets as well as true ones, and leaders who excite the people's worst as well as best instincts.

The relation between the people and their leaders is necessarily one of mutual stimulation and support. The people need spokesmen to enlighten and inspire them; their leaders need the moral support of the society in their efforts to raise the

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political order to levels ever more responsible and just. And this is where the sum of individual actions bears upon action by the state. Individual and governmental standards are not distinct, but neither can they be equated. Popular standards supply the climate in which great leaders flourish or do not flourish, just as leaders help to shape, for good or ill, the popular standards of their societies. Delicate and shifting as this interaction is, it has as its effect a spiral, of ascent or decline.

There will be little disagreement that America today seems not to be in an ascending spiral of governmental and private values. The newspapers tell a dismal story of deception and corruption in high, low and in-between places. Our prophets, more, it seems, than those of any age, are not so much dishonored as ignored. Leaders—of the kind the nation must have—are rarely to be heard; a tarnished national ethos seems unlikely to produce them.

Yet this must not be the end of the story. The direction of the spiral is not utterly beyond control; together, Americans can succeed in reversing its course. With all their weaknesses, the people deserve more than this.

STEP BY STEP

EVERY so often a spokesman for disarmament will publicize a list of the things that could be produced for the sums the United States allocates each year to national defense—many new homes, schools, hospitals and playgrounds, for example. This is a striking way of pointing to one factor in the burden of armaments. Yet most citizens today would rightly consider sweeping and unilateral American disarmament the height of irresponsibility. At present, what progress is possible in this direction has to be gradual. Or, as President Eisenhower said recently in a letter to Senator Humphrey, the problem has to be tackled in some of its "manageable segments."

For over a year now the principal focus for our disarmament negotiations has been the effort to come to an understanding with the Soviet Union on the policing of further thermonuclear weapons tests. After a promising degree of agreement was reached among scientific experts of the world's three atomic powers, the negotiations of official American, British, and Russian delegates in Geneva bogged down, giving support to the view that the U.S.S.R. saw in these protracted talks a means of attaining a test ban without policing.

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One of the key points of contention came from evidence that American scientists had accumulated on the difficulty of detecting underground test explosions. Our experts consider this new data so significant as to call for a thorough reexamination of proposed detection procedures. It is this that the Soviet Union has now agreed to. And, coupled with the Russian proposal to look into the possibility of eliminating the veto in the test control commission, this agreement appears to indicate greater willingness to consider an effective system for policing future tests.

The progress involved here is limited. Even the resolution sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union in the U.N. Assembly (favoring greater speed at Geneva and a continuation of the test ban) has apparently not dissuaded France from going ahead with its own test in the Sahara. French possession of the bomb would obviously complicate the question of controls. Moreover, the Soviet Union manifests no intention of abandoning its objective of world conquest. If it is willing, however, to set up self-policing agreements on further weapons tests, the peoples of the world will at least have reason to breathe somewhat easier.

LOYALTY OATHS IN SCHOOL

THE NATIONAL Defense Education Act of 1958 has once again been subjected to severe criticism for one of its provisions, criticism so telling that the provision may finally be changed. The Act provides federal loans for college students —provided that, before receiving the loan, the student swears that he does not support an organization that believes in or teaches the "overthrow of the United States government by force." This requirement was early attacked by many people. Senator John Kennedy, for instance, strongly opposed it, and Arthur Flemming, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, suggested that it be repealed.

Even though several schools (Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore) refused to join the program because of the required loyalty oath, this early criticism was unable to effect the provision's removal. But other schools soon saw fit to withdraw: Amherst, Antioch, Bennington, Goucher, Cornell, Reed, Sarah Lawrence, St. John's of Maryland and Wilmington of Ohio all decided that the oath infringed upon academic freedom.

This list was then already imposing when Yale, Harvard and Oberlin recently withdrew from the program. Approximately thirteen hundred colleges and universities still participate in the program, so that it will not immediately collapse because of these withdrawals. Nevertheless, they constitute a strong and much needed criticism of the debated provision. The desire to impose loyalty oaths in areas where they are uncalled for, unnecessary and unhelpful stems from the near-hysteria of recent years. During that time, when many people wished to adopt even more dubious measures as long as they were labeled "anti-Communist," one might understand, while deploring, an act which grants loans to needful students only if they swear that they are loyal. The provision is, nonetheless, a foolish, offensive form and should be easily seen for what it is today. If more leading schools withdraw from the program in protest against this provision it may stand a good chance of being withdrawn. And the schools will have performed one of the critical functions we have a right to expect of them.

KOREAN OUTLOOK

THERE IS every reason that the people of Korea should be reunited. They are one people with a common language, a common history, a common tradition. The industrial north with its power resources and its mineral wealth forms an economic complement to the agricultural south. And it was in Korea that the United Nations took its stand, resorting to military action in its determination to put a stop to further Communist territorial aggression. The General Assembly's recurring efforts to bring about free elections and reunification in Korea have justice and solemn treaties on their side. There is a strong case for raising the two-fold question now for the record. But, as Communist China is at present so vehemently in its "Stalinist phase," there is no real chance for either U.N. objective.

Later this month the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency is to wind up its nine years of operations, during which it distributed some one hundred and fifty million dollars contributed by thirty-nine nations (all outside aid to South Korea totals one and three-quarter billions, the bulk of it from the United States). The repairing of the physical ravages of the war appears to be over. Yet the stabilization of the South Korean economy has not yet begun.

Three-quarters of its twenty-two million people are engaged in farming or fishing for their liveli-

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hood. A few small industries have been set up, but both capital and skilled workers are scarce. There have also been modest efforts to create hydroelectric power facilities. Some light on the state of the South Korean economy may be had from the figures cited by *The Voice of Korea*, that imports last year were valued at $284,000,000, exports at $17,000,000. At its present stage of economic development South Korea is hardly a viable commonwealth.

It also faces other difficulties. Syngman Rhee continues to enjoy wide personal prestige as a national symbol, but his regime can hardly be regarded as a political democracy in the modern sense. It is significant that members of the Korean Democratic Party, his principal opposition, are seeking organizational reforms that would relegate the Presidency to a largely ceremonial function. And all too often personal favoritism and corruption are said to have held back measures intended for the common good.

Militarily the South Koreans find themselves at a disadvantage because of the build-up of the North Korean army and air force, in violation of the armistice agreement. The American commander there complains of his lack of troops and modernized equipment but asserts that he has at his disposal enough deterrent force to hold off an attack until help comes.

There are plenty of reasons for discouragement about South Korea. But its brave people continue to be symbols of a dedication to human freedom and the will to resist aggression. America and the free world must provide material and moral support until these people attain at last the security for which they have struggled so courageously.

PATHS OF COMMUNISM

THE NEW YORK *Times'* correspondent in Poland, A. M. Rosenthal, was recently expelled for having "probed too deeply" into Polish matters. Writing from Vienna, Mr. Rosenthal has since given a relatively full account of the present status of the Communist regime in Poland. The Polish people, from the peasants to the intellectuals, have resisted or remained largely indifferent to the leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulka. They are under no illusion that Communism will soon fade or that the Party rule will crumble. And the lesson of Hungary remains alive to remind them of what open rebellion would mean. Nevertheless, those who are deeply committed to Communism are limited, apparently, almost entirely to those in top-echelon positions.

The reaction of Mr. Gomulka has been the classic answer—greater pressure. He has been urged in this direction by the Soviet Union, of course, but even more by developments within his own country. In spite of increased pressures from above, however, most Poles believe that a return to harsher times is no longer possible. It is clear that the path of Communism, and of Communists, is not a simple matter in the captive nations. Other satellite countries are not in the same position as Poland—or Hungary. But if we are to speak realistically of the "Communist world" we should be continually aware of the elements which do much to make it up. We have, it is hoped, learned not to speak glibly of "liberation," as was once our State Department policy. But we must remind ourselves continually, when matters of exchanges or foreign aid arise, of the possibilities which remain open to the peoples of Eastern Europe.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

HIGH on the list of President Eisenhower's hopes for his last year in office is the triumph of a balanced budget. So high, indeed, is the priority of this goal that every other national objective is being adjusted to it. Defense spending, for instance, will undoubtedly be trimmed, in accordance with budgetary demands. In fact, the very organization of the armed forces has been scrutinized by the Budget Bureau and significant changes urged in the name of economy.

Foreign military aid, European policy, weapons development, tariffs, trade, aid to underdeveloped countries—all these, according to Washington reports, have been or will be shaped in the interests of "fiscal responsibility," protecting our gold reserve, and economy in general.

Members of his own Cabinet are said to be trying to shake Mr. Eisenhower's resolve on his next budget, but it is obvious that he listens mostly to Secretary of the Treasury Anderson and the "economizers" in his Administration. We will know better when the budget is announced, but the signs are all there: a budget which puts the cart before the horse, which begins not with the needs of the nation and the world but with the available slices of an untouchable fiscal pie. To meet the challenges of our times in this backwards fashion is the opposite of what is claimed for it. That is to say, it is fiscal irresponsibility.

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Television's Double Image

Must television be dependent for its life only on its utility as a seller of soap?

by EDWARD T. CHASE

PUBLIC DISMAY over the television quiz scandals may yet make the exposures a providential development. The best of our journalist-philosophers have been prompted to make searching reexaminations of the television industry; governmental authorities have lumbered into action; and the public at large has become engaged in animated discussion of the problem.

A further result of this is that there are signs on every hand of critical reflections on the omnipotent place in our national life of the very market system in which television finds its function—as a selling device. As could easily have been predicted, attention has quickly shifted from the surface manifestation of deception on T.V. to the selling mechanism collectively known as Madison Avenue. The advertising business in its entirety may now be in for a rough going over.

Properly so. After all, television is a creature of Madison Avenue and is presently inconceivable apart from it. But it would be a pity if the discussions on this whole matter were to snag on the popular cliché that Madison Avenue is the villain of the piece and proceed no deeper into the problem. One of the silliest myths of the time, good for a series of best-sellers from Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* to the new best-seller-to-be Irwin Ross's *The Image Makers* (subtitled "The Fabulous World of Public Relations"), is that the advertising agencies comprise an autonomous conspiratorial body that single-handedly cons the public into a frenzy of irrational consumption. The fact is that the agencies are an integral and very subservient part of the whole posture and dynamic of American business, whose very life is selling. Far from being autonomous or alone in the effort to manipulate public desires, the agencies take their marching orders from corporate management. They are an obvious instance but by no means the most important of many kinds of efforts by American businesses to succeed in competitive marketing.

What should give us pause is the question of how we have managed to arrange our affairs so that a major public institution such as television is dependent for its life upon its utility as a selling technique in the service of profit-making corporations. Remember that television in the first instance is a method of communication derived from a very limited natural resource of all the people, namely, the radio spectrum.

Now it has often been observed that the United States' particular talent is to combine in amiable partnership a mixture of public and private enterprise. Depending upon your viewpoint, this represents "creeping socialism" or "leadership responsive to the complex needs of twentieth century society." The avowed thumb rule of the present Administration has been to let private enterprise have a free hand except where it is clearly demonstrable that the government can do a better job. Arthur Schlesinger, Adlai Stevenson and Walter Reuther in articles and speeches have each pressed the philosophy that the antithesis between government and private enterprise still postulated by Old Guard Republicans is a destructive misconception and that partnership between the two, notably in such an undertaking as urban renewal, marks the true nature of the American experiment. They envision a healthy evolution of our national life free from doctrinaire socialism on the one hand, or do-nothing government on the other, and deriving its strength from this ever more complex cooperation between the public and voluntary sectors. But where does television fit into this partnership scheme of things?

AT PRESENT, nowhere. Nor should this be too surprising. The overwhelming reality about our national life at this juncture is that the complacent dictum of Calvin Coolidge of thirty-five years back still applies: "The business of America is business"

Mr. Chase writes frequently on cultural and social questions for this and other publications.

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(though it is a different kind of business from Mr. Coolidge's day). What this translates down into in detail is that the principal energies of our people are expended in the nourishing of individual corporations. All but a fraction of our labor force, equipment and executive talent is absorbed in the corporate life. How significant this is for the individual has been fully expressed by William H. Whyte, Jr. and David Riesman, among others. The point of consequence here is not so much this towering domination of the corporation as the organizational framework within which Americans expend their life energies, but rather the peculiar limitations the corporate structure exerts upon our moral imagination.

The simple truth is that the well-being of the corporation is the very first consideration of our most talented, best educated class. The public good is a distant second, in the hierarchy of interests, and then only if it is consistent with the individual corporation's good. Anyone who has been an organization man will testify to the validity of this statement. It is in this context only that we can undersand the weird state of affairs whereby an institution such as television is pressed into the service not of enlightening the public but of bemusing it on behalf of the marketing interests of our corporations.

And what is the modern corporation? Is it an organization which by its nature is under any effective compulsion to serve the general good? Only indirectly, in the sense that its products or services must ultimately fulfill a recurring need if it is to exist. But, unlike the family-dominated corporation of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the modern corporation is owned by a vast impersonal army of shareholders, often twice-removed from ownership authority since the stock is held by other institutions, the mutual funds, pension trusts, insurance companies; and the corporation is run by salaried officials anxiously dedicated to the commercial well-being of the corporation, a species that Adolf A. Berle, Jr. in his current *Power Without Property* describes as a new kind of civil service, but a civil service that is notably free from any profound sense of obligation to the spiritual well-being of society at large.

Once one comprehends the awesome dominance of the corporate structure as the form in which our material drives are fulfilled, then the T.V. quiz scandal and other apparent anomalies in our national life become intelligible. For example, while the historical interpretations and the technical reforms advanced by John Kenneth Galbraith in *The Affluent Society* have been somewhat demolished by his critics, no one has refuted his central finding that America is stricken with an impoverishment in its public goods and services while the private sector wallows in relative luxury. Professor Galbraith's ingenious explanation of this is his concept of "the dependence effect," by which he means that production of non-essential private goods is sustained not by genuine needs but by the synthesizing of new "wants" by the very production system itself, that is, by advertising.

But this does not go deep enough. As noted before, the advertising effort is only a part of the overall corporate effort to sell, to manipulate the public for the corporation's own ends. The weakness in the system is that in a corporation-structured society, no formal means is at hand to further the general public's interest except government, which in our ideology is to practice as much as possible a hands-off policy. In short, the public is to be the beneficiary of the trickle-down process, the sloppy half-truth put forward by Charlie Wilson that what's good for General Motors is good for the nation.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, Jr. approached the problem from another direction when, in a recent speech, he warned against allowing the consumer market to determine national priorities. Professor Schlesinger's devout wish is that a revived Democratic Party leadership will usher in what he (with Representative Chester Bowles in his new book *The Coming Political Breakthrough*) terms "qualitative liberalism," that is, replacing the New Deal stress on immediate problems of subsistence and survival with a new emphasis on bettering the *quality* of Americans' lives.

What Mr. Schlesinger is proposing, really, is an institutional reform, that government shall have ascendancy over the profit-inspired corporation in establishing where the people shall expend their resources. Coming back to television's plight, the logical consequence of this viewpoint, of course, would be to free at least part of television from the undisputed sway of the profit motive and place it under the direction of government.

The precedents for governmental control of all or at least a portion of the precious frequencies employed for television broadcasting are numerous, with the British system being the one most often invoked as a model for the U.S.A. The B.B.C. television system is entirely a government operation, while the new Independent Television Authority is the commercial operation, operating roughly along the lines of the so-called "magazine system" suggested the other day by C.B.S.—the net effect of which is to prevent the advertiser from controlling the programs themselves. As has been often pointed out, the virtue of the British system, whatever its deficiencies, is that the viewing audience is presented with a choice: B.B.C. programming free from the pressures of the market, the market being the basis for the terrible leveling effect on programs that seek the widest possible audience, or programs in the I.T.A. system which, being necessarily responsive to "popular" taste,

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may escape the alleged tendency to stuffiness or dictation of B.B.C.

It is extraordinary and alarming that it took the T.V. quiz scandals to prompt the first serious consideration of reform for the whole system. Must the American public, we might ask, always depend on some foul-up for the initiating of improved public policies? John Fischer, editor of *Harper's,* can be credited with the first enlightened effort to conceive of a better T.V. system, with his proposal earlier this year for a non-commercial network to be supported by law by the joint contribution of time and talent by the commercial networks. But the most important, since most radical and most "official," development in the whole episode is the new suggestion by C.B.S. noted above, of instituting the so-called magazine system. The idea here is that the network would then adopt the viewpoint of an editorial board such as a magazine's, that is, exercise discrimination in program scheduling and content as a matter of "editorial" policy rather than surrender that prerogative, as now happens, to the sway of individual corporations solely interested in maximum public awareness of their products.

WHETHER such a system would be sufficiently strong to counter the overwhelming pressure for loading the schedules with shows capable of pleasing the lowest common denominator in our society is a very moot question. No speculative article such as this one can settle the question; it will require actual test. What is more important to bear in mind is that the lesson of the T.V. scandals raises the larger question: how sacrosanct is corporate profit-making to be in areas, like T.V. where there is such a considerable vested public interest? Too often, in our fear of statism, in response to the general American hostility to bureaucracy and "politics," and in our vivid awareness of the totalitarianisms of Europe and Asia, we equate freedom with an indiscriminate and sentimental attempt to perpetuate an outmoded laissez-faire in areas in which it renders a disservice.

The fact of the matter is that we now have precedent after precedent where government intrusion is on a very large scale and yet there has been no attempt to dictate nor any effect of destroying the institution. For example, throughout our history and on an increasing scale there has been Federal subsidy in education, and no one can point to distressing interference in educational policy or any deleterious effects on administration. The lesson is that in a rapidly evolving society there are bound to be great and essential new roles for government to play as a sponsor and subsidizer of institutions that cannot be fully integrated into the profit system of our corporate-structured society. It is an uninformed sentimentality or a perversity to try to obscure this fact with cant about the dangers of "creeping socialism."

In all truth, what can topple our free society most rapidly, perhaps, is inaction in the face of glaringly inadequate public services and the debasement of cultural institutions, such as television, all in the name of liberty. Once we concede that our highest loyalties should not be confined to the corporation, and that government need not be an enemy of either freedom or quality, then we can dispassionately and imaginatively construct institutions to accommodate the basic public interest, utilizing government—when this is advisable—as a valuable aid.

It would appear that this is the need in television. Now is the time for a calm and prejudice-free scrutiny of all the possibilities, without pretense about governmental support being "unthinkable." What is unthinkable is that we blunder on with a system that is clearly defective.

LONELINESS

(Saint Joseph)

Vexing the heart, old scenes returned:

at high harvest once, I looked aloft
seeking: will day hold fair? it did not.
What promised fair dealt treacherously with me,
golden stooks sagged and rotted in rain.

Or felling a noble high-ranging tree
I chained it round and set for home.
Laborious day breathed easier at dusk
(a fair table, a plow standing free,
out of that butt, hour on hour
of December fire)
But no. At first stroke of saw
puff of dryrot pulled my heart down.

And for her sake, for honor and troth spoken
I wandered the village mire,
while dogs baited a sullen moon up, and
always in despite of dark, I must meet
her eyes of uttermost love, like near stars
denying night

summoning me to hearth and her:
she rising to greet me, fears falling back
like sullen dogs from her pure fires.

After such sorrow, joy. *Fear not Joseph.*
One night my eyes
knelt to her eyes, across the newborn One.

DANIEL BERRIGAN, S. J.

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A report on a typical member of Egypt's rising new middle class

Portrait of Ahmad

by JAMES KRITZECK

AHMAD is an Egyptian and a Moslem, twenty-nine years old. I have known him for five years. He is slight and dark, has a square face, a thin moustache and a deep voice. He is intelligent, self-searching, witty, industrious, docile, loyal and punctual; obstinate, suspicious, emulous, jealous, fickle, vain and shy. He wears "Western" clothing—usually light-colored suits, white shirts and busy ties. He has never worn the red *tarboosh* (or "fez") or the *galabiyyah* (an ankle-length robe), two typical items of native Egyptian male dress.

Ahmad has lived all of his life in Cairo. He is very fond of his city, as well he might be. Cairo is one of the great cities of the world, possibly the greatest Mediterranean capital after Rome. Few cities offer a richer or more varied fare of spiritual, intellectual, artistic and sensual delights than does Cairo, and Ahmad's favorite view, from the Muqattam hills above the city, dramatizes that fact unforgettably: from there, in a single sweeping glance, one can see monuments of nearly every age of civilized man, from the Step-Pyramid of Zoser to the Nile Hilton Hotel. Ahmad has visited many other parts of Egypt, including Sinai and the ancient cities of Upper Egypt, and he makes several pleasure trips to Alexandria every year; but he has never set foot outside his own country.

Until last spring Ahmad lived with his mother, an older brother and sister-in-law and two younger sisters (his father died five years ago) in a large second-floor apartment in Abbassiah, a district in the northwestern part of the city. He used to complain about the boring and relentless "togetherness" of Egyptian families, which is indeed a frustrating and stifling feature for their younger members, but he now enjoys the new freedom and privacy of a small apartment (two rooms and a bath) in the center of the city.

Ahmad is still single, but he is not likely to remain in that state much longer. His family has spoken insistently of Ahmad's "settling down" and of one of his distant cousins as a suitable wife for him. Ahmad scarcely knows this cousin but does not seem in the least opposed to the match, since the girl is beautiful and said to be "even-tempered." Unless I am mistaken, however, he would prefer to delay this marriage a while longer in order to savor a little more of his recently-won independence.

AN attempt to define the "middle class" of modern Egypt could be a sociologist's nightmare. Still, Ahmad would be included in any definition of that term. Quite obviously he is midway between the peasant *fellaheen* and the affluent *pasha* classes. His forebears for several generations have been Cairene merchants of moderate means, but the traditional pre-revolutionary "middle class" of Egyptian merchants was peopled to an incredible degree by Greeks, Italians, Armenians and non-Egyptian, often non-Moslem, Arabs. Ahmad's family shared little in common with that class. Now, however, by pressure and conviction, families like Ahmad's are beginning to form a new "middle class" with new values and orientations, while at the same time laying claim to the manners and customs of the old "middle class." These families seem less interested in wealth or status than in a greater personal consumption of "the good things of life." They choose their course as individual families (and sometimes as individuals within those families). The emergence of a class of Ahmads in Egypt is a phenomenon of considerable importance, for this rapidly self-improving class has already assumed a kind of dominance in many areas of Egyptian society.

Ahmad's family had come up in the world considerably even during his childhood. After some extra work and saving, Ahmad was able to follow his brother to Cairo University and to earn there a degree in economics and mathematics. He was not a prize student, but such a degree will normally guarantee the bearer a good job in the civil service or in business.

Ahmad performed his military service immediately after graduation from the university. He saw the service as a patriotic obligation and has remarked that he is glad that the system of *badaliyyah* (payment for waiving of service) no longer obtains. Although he was far from enjoying military service, he once thought of applying for admission to the military academy, from which most officers—another privileged class—emerge.

Mr. Kritzeck, a member of the faculty at Princeton, is a specialist in Islamic literature and culture.

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He is now working in an office which appears to combine brokerage, realty, insurance and the practice of law. He is salaried, of course, and earns a good income by Egyptian standards. He has the promise of advancement but is so alive to opportunities in other directions that he will almost have to try several other jobs, I venture to predict, for his own peace of mind.

THE VICINITY of Cairo has seen successive capitals of Egypt for some eight thousand years, but the Fatimid general Jawhar al-Siqilli is credited with the foundation of the city called "al-Qahirah" in the tenth century. The "old city" is a maze of cramped houses and twisting, dusty streets; it has a charm all its own. The "new city" is quite different; it was planned around circles, squares and gardens (because the Khedive Isma'il loved Paris) in the last century.

Ahmad lives on a side street near one of the principal circles. His apartment is located in a rather dismal old building with a dingy stairwell and a temperamental Sudanese *buwwaab* (doorkeeper). He could afford better (the rent is about one-fifteenth of his salary), but he is making a half-hearted attempt to save money. The rooms themselves are quite dark, but there is a small, pleasant balcony over the street. In the living room there are a few low couches and chairs against the walls and two circular brass trays serving as coffee-tables. There is a rug on the floor but no pictures on the walls. The small bathroom has rather delicate plumbing facilities and the hot water faucet functions only during certain hours of the day. He plays his radio constantly while he is at home.

Ahmad leaves for work just before nine in the morning. It is about a twenty-minute walk from his apartment to his office. He eats no breakfast but soon finds an occasion for a lengthy coffee-break. Such coffee-breaks punctuate his whole working day, in fact; it would be unthinkable to discuss business with a client or tackle any serious office problem without the little brass pots of coffee. Ahmad works at a cluttered old desk in his office with five other men, all older than himself, until about one o'clock. Then he lunches, goes home to nap, and returns to the office from four to about seven. His dinner is not a much larger meal than his lunch. He eats in certain small restaurants specializing in Arab and Levantine food. He likes meat dishes cooked with vegetables, stuffed squash and grape leaves, beans, onions, and thick soups.

Unless he happens to be seized by one of his occasional frenzies of reading, Ahmad will usually go out in the evenings. Although he is far from provident, he does not like to spend his money at the great hotels —the Hilton, Shepheard's, and the Semiramis. Alone, he is content to sit at the sidewalk cafés or walk in the gardens; when he is with friends he goes to the movies, of which he sees an astounding number, and the smaller casinos. Like most other Egyptian males he considers himself an expert on "oriental dancers." He gives unhurried scrutiny—to a point that would embarrass most Americans—to every girl he passes on the street. "Dating" in the American sense of the term is almost impossible and therefore almost unknown.

Ahmad gets little physical exercise. He swims, but that has not really assumed the proportion of a sport for him. If one day he succeeds in winning membership in the Gezirah Sporting Club, however, he will probably develop the customary sporting interests of its members. He does not yet own a car, but many of his friends do. He seems to incline toward quiet, undemonstrative people, people who can be serious for fair lengths of time and people who have traveled—all of whom are at a premium in Egypt.

Ahmad has never drunk spirits in his life. He has tasted beer several times and does not like it. He smokes moderately (usually a local brand indistinguishable in everything save cost from American filter brands); when he sits in a coffee-house he sometimes orders a *nargeely*, or water-pipe. Occasionally, but not regularly, he attends a *hasheesh* party. *Hasheesh* is an intoxicant derived from hemp which is, despite its ban by law, a fairly common feature of Egyptian social life, especially among bachelors. Its effects are said to be the exact opposite of alcohol's: the mind and senses are sharpened rather than blurred and there are no opiate dreams or hangovers. These sessions are always held late in the evenings with three or four male friends in their own apartments. Ahmad likes the comradeship of the *hasheesh* "liturgy" and claims that *hasheesh* has never impaired his health or efficiency and that he never craves it.

AHMAD IS a loyal citizen of the United Arab Republic and, virtually by the same token, an ardent Arab nationalist. Arab nationalism is a subject which never fails to win his undivided attention and to excite his very best thought. Although much of his knowledge of and attitude toward that subject has been gleaned from and formed by political speeches and the newspapers (which he reads religiously), he has a better knowledge and understanding of the movement than most Arabs. He is also quite willing to reconsider positions he has taken and to entertain objections to any of them. In this respect he strikes me as untypical of young Egyptians otherwise like him.

Ahmad likes Nasser. He liked Naguib before him, for that matter, and some members of his family even had connections with a more innocent branch of the Moslem Brotherhood, which Nasser destroyed. He has reservations about the ability of certain persons around Nasser and professes to regret the predominance of army types in government bureaus. His ardent feeling for Nasser seems to be connected with what he con-

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ceives of as the dangerous threat on the part of the West—and now also of the East—to destroy his leader and, with him, any chance of greater Arab unity.

So far as I can tell, Ahmad is no longer sanguine about Israel, the arms issue, the Aswan dam, the Suez seizure or the invasion of 1956; all of these have retreated to dimmer corners of his thinking. He is now very much concerned about Iraq, Communism, and Red Chinese insults to the United Arab Republic. The Soviet Union, China and refractory Arab states have added themselves to such old villains as Britain, France and Israel. The United States, Ahmad feels, is partly to be excused for its ignorant hostility because it is young, newly on the scene of world politics and obviously duped by both its allies and its enemies. In other words, Ahmad mirrors quite faithfully the attitudes his government has been placing before him.

Ahmad regards the Arabic language as the basic unifying tie among all Arabs. He loves the language and enjoys nothing better than the sort of argument over morphology or syntax which I, as a *frangi* (It is always a bit startling for an American of Czech ancestry to be called a "Frank"!) professor of Arabic, often precipitate.

GENERALLY speaking, Ahmad is intellectually curious, but his lack of intellectual curiosity about his religion is sometimes exasperating. He is a Moslem all right, a typical and maybe even a good Moslem. He knows a good portion of the Koran by heart from Koran-school, but he knows little of Islamic dogma or history and marvels that anyone who knows more about it than he does could refuse to accept Islam. His major proselytizing point is that Islam is the "easiest" of the monotheistic religions—the same point made by al-Hashimi in one of the first Moslem-Christian debates in the ninth century.

Ahmad prays, but not necessarily at the prescribed hours. He does not eat pork but on the other hand does not fast during the month of Ramadan. He has never made the pilgrimage to Mecca and shows no overpowering desire to do so. He pokes fun at the *ulama* (doctors of Islamic religious law) as old graybeards who have been keeping Islam from becoming "modern." He certainly has no appreciation of the plight of the non-Moslem minorities in Egypt since 1952 and tends to think of the numerous voluntary emigrants of that class as cowards, or at least as weaklings who are finally revealing their total dependence upon foreign civilization.

There is a touching simplicity about Ahmad's soul and a good deal of joy in his heart. He has an active and rigorous conscience and possesses innumerable virtues. He is the sort of friend I think of instinctively whenever I am reminded in some fashion or another of the usual, grotesque American stereotype of the Arab.

THE SCREEN

WHO HUR?

GENERAL LEW WALLACE, whose *Ben-Hur* was published in 1880 and has by now hit the five million mark in sales, is said to have been astounded at the fancy stage production given his story in 1900. If that is true, he would certainly have been super-astounded at the fifteen-million-dollar movie M-G-M has made of it, for it is easily the most spectacular film I've ever seen in many years of moviegoing.

Sam Zimbalist's production has a good cast, with handsome sets filmed at the Cinecitta Studios in Rome or on location in Italy and Israel, and the whole was beautifully photographed by Robert L. Surtees in color and the new crystal-clear Camera 65 process. The result is an outstanding pictorial achievement. But Producer Zimbalist and Director William Wyler, realizing that it is now U. to sneer at spectacles, were determined to make something better than just another supercolossal movie, and they have. Starting with Wallace's story, which is somewhat of a creaky dodo, Karl Tunberg wrote a script that preserved Wallace's main themes but glided over the fuddy-duddy plot details, and, with the help of several other writers, particularly Christopher Fry, who worked right on the set, came up with dialogue and characterizations that sound and look right in 1959 as well as in 26 A.D.

William Wyler cannot be overpraised for his direction of "Ben-Hur," a task that must have been much more difficult than his earlier achievement, which included "Wuthering Heights," "The Best Years of Our Lives," "The Little Foxes" and other films with interesting characters of some depth. Aided by his scriptwriters—and no doubt a flash or two from Wallace's original—Wyler has successfully peopled his spectacle with characters above the usual pasteboard pageant level, and the cast has responded well.

Charlton Heston is excellent in the demanding role of Judah Ben-Hur, a hero in every sense of the word, a Jewish prince, a man of convictions who speaks out against the Roman conquerors who are occupying his Judea, a noble sufferer when he's sentenced to the galleys, but still a man of high ideals after three years as a galley slave and also now a muscular athlete who, during the magnificently staged sea battle, saves the Roman commander who later adopts him and makes him into a first-rate charioteer. Heston comes through well not only in the body-beautiful exercises but also as a man of extreme hatred against Messala, the Roman tribune who persecuted him and the whole House of Hur, and as a man of devotion to his ill-treated mother (Martha Scott) and sister (Cathy O'Donnell), and as

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a tender lover of Esther (Haya Harareet), the slave girl he freed, and as a convert to Christianity after he witnesses the Crucifixion.

Although Stephen Boyd looks fine in the role of the villainous Messala, he is not entirely convincing; this is due not to his acting but to the role itself—that of an evil man whose villainy and lust for power are not clearly motivated. As Quintus Arrius, the Roman commander who recognizes Judah's worth, and as the wily sheik who backs Judah in the big chariot race against Messala, Jack Hawkins and Hugh Griffith are first-rate. Also good is the large supporting cast that includes Sam Jaffe, Finlay Currie (as Balthasar), Frank Thring (as Pontius Pilate) and many, many others as Romans and Jews and various nationals, as well as the crowds of well-directed extras who fill the screen in the mob scenes.

If "Ben-Hur" falls down in any departments, it is in its excessive length; the picture could have got over its points and splendors in less than three-and-a-half-hours running time. Another weakness, one for which, perhaps, there was no solution, is that the Crucifixion comes almost as an anti-climax after the chariot race, which is the picture's most famous scene. Aside from that, the film handles its religious themes well enough, on the whole, although for a while I was afraid that the film makers had almost forgotten that the original sub-title of Lew Wallace's book was "A Tale of the Christ."

After the picture's beautiful and impressive opening shots of the Nativity, the year jumps to 26 A.D. and then the story itself runs during the following years to the Crucifixion and Judah Ben-Hur's conversion, which is the point of the whole plot. During this story we see Christ seldom (we never see His face). When the prisoner Judah is being marched in chains to the galleys, he is grateful to the Carpenter Who gives him a much-desired drink of water. Later, when the triumphant Ben-Hur returns to Jerusalem, he refuses to join the crowds going to hear the Nazarene preach on the Mount.

Still later, however, deeply impressed by Esther's stories of this Man, Judah takes his mother and sister who are stricken with leprosy to the Healer to be cured. But Christ is on trial, the Way of the Cross has already started, and Judah follows the bloody Way. These and the subsequent scenes are a curious mixture of theatrical pageant and extreme realism, and it might have been wiser here to concentrate on Judah and on his reactions which draw him to the God-Man. The film ends shortly thereafter, and while I certainly wouldn't want it to be any longer, the finale is almost too fast and too downhill after the chariot race, which is so superbly done that it is likely to be a landmark for years to come.

All in all, whatever its drawbacks and errors, "Ben-Hur" itself sets a new standard for spectacles, one of which its makers and everyone involved might well be proud. PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

WHERE ELSE?

A NICETY of discrimination, guilelessly tucked in the theater program of "Only in America," charmed me last week during the disastrous nocturnal passage of that event at the Cort. In melancholy search of diversion, I strayed across the customary biographical account of the authors, Messrs. Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. I read that "Inherit the Wind" had been "translated into twenty-six languages"; that "Auntie Mame" was "still playing in half-a-dozen foreign capitals"; that "The Gang's All Here" has "provoked a storm of political controversy on the eve of the Presidential campaign." I reflected that these were doubtless three of the worst plays I had ever seen, and that one of them," Auntie Mame," enjoys a dubious singularity as the only play ever to have been improved by the screen. At that moment, however, this tribute to the Messrs. Lawrence & Lee came to its majestic finale. "They turn a deaf ear to Hollywood," the resumé concluded frostily: "their lives are devoted entirely to the living theater."

Like Miss Beatrice Lillie confronted with the facts of life, my first far thought and wild was: *Does mother know?* What prodigies of fidelity had wasted here on the heedless air! Were such enterprises of moral enlightenment properly honored in our midst? Consider, as an instance, this situation of Mr. Harry Golden and his amiable causeries. Consider the deprivation of your spirit, denied the experience of their stage transcription. Consider—*What!* You saw them at Walgreen's last week while stocking up on Flama Grandé? Don't be petty. Why pay 35¢ plain when you can pay $6.90 fancy? As *McCall's* says, we have to start our life of spending together.

But life reminds me of living, and I forgot: this is the living theater. Yes. So Mr. Golden agreed to permit his representation, and a playhouse—rare commodity —was reserved, and twenty-four actors assembled, and elaborate decor constructed; and jokes about Jews were joked, and pithy—oh, boy! that pith—comments about the races commented, and over all spread the wondrous warm glow of *only in America, only in America.* And as I left this living theater, and went not gentle into the good night, I reflected on Mr. Harry Golden's title with an irony he could not fail to savor. *(At the Cort.)* RICHARD HAYES.

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An Exchange of Views

"America's Image Abroad"

Berlin

TO THE EDITORS: As a long-time subscriber, I am dismayed to see you print an article so tendentiously pontifical as Donald Brandon's "America's Image Abroad" [Sept. 18].

It is likely that I have a bias in regard to the United States Information Agency, since I am one of its overseas employees. It is even more likely, however, that Dr. Brandon has a bias, because his opportunities to observe U.S.I.A. operations have been so limited both in time and in space. Dr. Brandon's only stay abroad, to the best of my knowledge, was a period of about one year during which he served as Assistant Cultural Officer in the American Embassy at Bonn, Germany, a post which is utterly atypical among the almost two hundred Foreign Service posts at which U.S.I.A. people work.

The article is a curious combination of factual misstatements, unscholarly generalizations, and a frenzied beating of horses which were dead long before Dr. Brandon began his brief career in U.S.I.A. To make up for his lack of specific knowledge, your author (and my former colleague) has used the technique, familiar in some quarters but not in the pages of The Commonweal, of piling unsupported accusations upon unsupported accusations with such rapidity that the reader has no time to wonder where the evidence is. For the sake of brevity I shall make four main points, since a full commentary would be far longer than the original article.

1. Who in the world are "the men from Madison Avenue who have been running our propaganda program?" There are certainly people in U.S.I.A. who came to the Agency from advertising agencies and public relations firms (I can remember two whom I have met over a period of eight years), but their number is infinitesimal compared with that of ex-reporters (press, radio and film) and ex-teachers. Of the thirty Presidentially-appointed members of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, the Broadcast Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee on Cultural Information—all of which bodies together with a new one called the Panel on Public Relations Policies and Techniques, help to determine U.S.I.A. policies—I can identify only three as "men from Madison Avenue." That people like Erwin D. Canham, Lewis W. Douglas and Philip W. Reed would sit approvingly by while "the advertising men in charge of U.S.I.A." "sell" U.S. foreign policy as if it were toothpaste is as unlikely as that the Congress which, contrary to Dr. Brandon's statements, has long had an abiding interest in the program content of U.S.I.A. operations, would continue to vote public funds for such a lost cause. The end of "the reign of the admen" is not in sight because it never started.

2. The principal offenses with which U.S.I.A. personnel are charged by Dr. Brandon are precisely those which U.S.I.A. has for years been urging its personnel not to commit. "Sloganeer"—there must be a more euphonious neologism—"assuming that (the Agency's) basic . . . techniques were valid," being "self-righteous and aggressive" are, and have been ever since I can remember, directly contrary to Agency policy. Because U.S.I.A. people work in so many and so varied environments, they are encouraged to maintain an air of healthy skepticism about any and all techniques. What makes for successful U.S.I.A. operation in Paris does not in Dacca, and vice versa. As for the charge that "the majority of rank and file U.S.I.A. officers stationed abroad scoff at the cultural program and lack the sense of purpose and the skills required to develop meaningful contacts." I do not wish to be uncharitable, but I can make nothing out of such a judgment by such a green observer except the personal rancor of a person who himself lacked the sense of purpose and the skills.

3. To say that U.S.I.A. needs more "culture" and less "information" is to establish a false dichotomy. It is perfectly true that U.S.I.A. libraries at many posts should be "strengthened," but does that mean that the local newspaper editors should not be furnished quickly with the complete transcript of the President's latest press conference? Of course more leader grantees should be brought to the United States, but does that mean that no documentary film about the American system of government should be dubbed in local languages? The U.S.I.A. program in each of more than eighty countries must try to strike a locally appropriate balance between short- and long-term objectives, but surely neither set cancels the other out. U.S.I.A. Director George V. Allen *does* favor a long-range cultural program, but his approach represents far more a shift of emphasis than a reversal of previous Agency policies.

4. Dr. Brandon refers in the most alarmingly omniscient paragraph of his article to ". . . . the well-

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known language deficiencies of Agency personnel." I am currently assigned to one of six policy supervisory positions in R.I.A.S., a U.S.I.A. radio station which is the only 24-hour-a-day link with the West for most of the seventeen million people in the Soviet Zone of Germany. Here are *the principal* foreign language capabilities of the six U.S.I.A. Americans in the six R.I.A.S. jobs: *Bilingual:* Three in German, one each in Russian, Polish, French and Armenian; *Very Fluent:* Three in German, two in French, one in Bulgarian.

It would not be appropriate here to tackle some of Dr. Brandon's more general assertions and assumptions: "the low prestige of the United States abroad. . . ." "Congressmen . . . unaware of the necessity for radically overhauling the whole operation" ". . . four years of Voice of America propaganda about 'liberation of the satellites' ", "So long as America . . . is dominated by materialist and philistine values. . . ." ". . . the largely negative and merely anti-Communist character of U.S. foreign policy" I think you will agree that until Dr. Brandon sheds a little more light on these footless dicta it is better to let the shrimps whistle.

Permit me to end on a cheerful note: in one matter Dr. Brandon is correct. He says that U.S.I.A. considers that its "basic message" is valid. That basic message is contained in the President's Directive which reads as follows: "The purpose of the United States Information Agency shall be to submit evidence to people of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress and peace."

I am happy to subscribe to it, and I daresay so are all the other twelve hundred-odd Americans working abroad for U.S.I.A. JOHN R. MCCARTHY.

REPLY

San Francisco, Calif.

TO THE EDITORS: I was surprised at the tone, although not at the content of John McCarthy's comments on my article on U.S.I.A., for he is a loyal servant of that organization. It is perhaps worth noting at the outset that Mr. McCarthy's superior officer in Bonn (now stationed in Vienna) read a draft of my essay and offered no dissent. A University of San Francisco colleague who served with U.S.I.A. in Asia feels that my analysis was harsh but fair. I will comment on Mr. McCarthy's arguments point-by-point.

With regard to the question of bias, it is simply illogical to connect any supposed prejudice to length of service in U.S.I.A., which in itself has nothing to do with one's reaction to an organization. While it may not be considered relevant, I was with the U.S. Army and Military Government in Europe in 1945. This is my only overseas experience apart from the fourteen months I served with the Embassy in Bonn as Assistant to the Cultural Attaché. In any event, my article was based on a study of Agency materials, and of what others have written about the organization, and not just upon my admittedly limited tour of duty in Bonn.

That men from Madison Avenue have shaped the Agency's approach and program is evident both from study of recent editions of the Foreign Service Biographic Register and from analysis of the content of materials distributed overseas. Theodore Streibert, Director of the Agency for several years before Arthur Larson was named to succeed him, is one important example of Madison Avenue influence upon the Agency. I did not say that the *majority* of U.S.I.A. personnel have had a Madison Avenue background. My point was that their approach permeates the organization, and that they have been the most *influential* people in U.S.I.A. So far as the content of Agency materials is concerned, it is patent to anyone who is familiar with them that the image of America presented is at least as romantic as that found in the average American high school textbook on U.S. history. Doubtless a minority of Congressmen have been interested in the program content as well as the appropriations of U.S.I.A., but the program over the years has been basically unaltered and has continued to reflect the Madison Avenue mentality.

Whether or not the Agency has opposed the sloganeering of personnel and productions can be disputed. But that the organization in fact is guilty of such practices is again evident from study of the films, pamphlets and other materials disseminated. As for any "personal rancor" or inability, I will only say that my superiors (who had contact with my job performance) apparently did not share Mr. McCarthy's view, and that the head of the U.S.I.S. Mission in Bonn and personnel people in Washington, D.C., urged me to stay on with U.S.I.A.

Certainly I do not object (although American wire services have for years) to the Agency's distribution of copies of the President's press conferences and addresses to local editors. What I criticized in the information program was the lack of sophistication in U.S.I.A. materials defending American policies abroad and the U.S. domestic scene.

I am happy to learn of the language proficiency of the U.S.I.A. personnel with R.I.A.S. in West Berlin. It is unfortunate that both published and internal Foreign Service studies reveal that this capability is a striking exception to the over-all proficiency of overseas personnel. As Mr. McCarthy must surely know, these reports disclose that around seventy per cent of

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Foreign Service personnel cannot use a single foreign language.

As for the remarks in my article concerning the deficiencies of both the American scene and U.S. foreign policy, I and others more able and noteworthy have documented these weaknesses and problems in scores of books and articles in the last few years. As examples, I will just cite C. Z. Sulzberger's *What's Wrong With U. S. Foreign Policy*, and Joseph Wood Krutch's recent *Human Nature and the Human Condition*. Incidentally, I am sure that these critical works have not been purchased for the U.S. Information Libraries abroad, given the Agency's propensity to foster only the shining aspects of Americana.

Finally, I must, however sadly, dissent even from Mr. McCarthy's cheerful note concerning the basic message of U.S.I.A. The President's Directive merely defines the objective of the Agency, and takes for granted that American objectives and policies are in harmony with the legitimate aspirations of all mankind. I submit that this is not always the case (massive retaliation being one obvious example), and that the attempt to persuade the peoples of the world that it is through primarily commercial techniques is the unenviable and unrecognized task of John McCarthy and his colleagues in U.S.I.A. DONALD BRANDON.

A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES

Marxist Literary Critics

by MICHAEL HARRINGTON

DURING the thirties and forties, literary discussion in the United States had an air of excitement. The New Critics rose up in bitter protest against those who used external reference—social conditions, psychology, biography—as a key to esthetic interpretation. Even though the challengers spoke in the name of conservative values, talking of tradition, formal structure, the intrinsic merit of the work of art, they appeared then as radicals and iconoclasts.

Today, the New Criticism is part of the intellectual Establishment. In one form or another it dominates the academy and the literary magazines. Yet although the textual explications continue to appear and doctoral dissertations still probe relations of symbol and structure, the spirit of conservatism *manqué* is gone. Indeed, it is a predictable irony that the next period of literary re-evaluation will find the New Critics defending the very seats of eminence which they stormed only a few years ago. There are, after all, many ways in which a revolution can devour its own.

But at the present there is an interregnum, and it is possible to look back and to correct some of the polemical exaggerations of the heroic period of theory. One of the distortions had to do with the social criticism of literature, and particularly with Marxist literary analysis. In part this was a response to the vulgarity of much that was styled as "Marxism," a reaction against a fashionable dilletantism which affected some of the intellectuals in the thirties. In part it was a matter of genuine and even fundamental disagreement on how to approach a work of art. But serious discussion about the latter point can take place only if misunderstanding about the first is cleared up.

The publication of Arnold Hauser's *Philosophy of Art History* (Knopf, $7.50) offers an excellent opportunity for accomplishing this retrospect. In the factional image, the Marxist critic is mechanistic and determinist, insensitive to the specific quality which is the essence of the esthetic experience. Hauser, a theorist in the Marxist tradition, contradicts this projection on practically every count. Yet he is not an exception, and in understanding this it is necessary to confront the Marxist tradition of criticism seriously and sympathetically.

To a considerable extent, Marx and Engels must bear a certain responsibility for their more outrageous disciples. Their method, as Engels noted in some letters toward the end of his life, developed in a world of sharp political and ideological struggle. As a result, they often had a tendency to give a one-sided emphasis to their point of view, and in particular to underestimate the complexity of relationship between artistic and intellectual works and the life of a society. Engels' latter-day correction, however, has been the foundation stone of every Marxist literary theory of worth in the last sixty or so years. And a failure to understand his amendments has been at the center of all the tedious, dull and worthless writing which has postured as a serious social analysis of art.

Mr. Harrington writes frequently on political and cultural matters for this and other journals.

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THE CENTRAL point that Engels made in his letters was that works of the human spirit were not *immediately* related to social struggle and economic development, but rather that they bore the mark of the social origin in an indirect, often contradictory and peculiar way. Thus, if a basic reorientation of style almost always reflected change in values and consequently in society, the style could also take on a certain life of its own, gain a semi-autonomous influence and persist long after the historic factors which had presided at its birth had vanished. The art of David was, after all, acceptable to both the French monarchy and the French revolution.

Hauser restates this basic insight in this way: "All art is socially conditioned, but not everything in art is definable in sociological terms. Above all, artistic excellence is not so definable; it has no sociological equivalent. The same social conditions can give rise to valuable or to utterly valueless works, and such works have nothing in common but tendencies more or less irrelevant from the artistic point of view." History, in this perspective, is a living factor in every work of the imagination—the eye, as Marx put it, is a social organ —but it is so in an extremely complex way and he who ignores this fact does so at his peril.

The number of important Marxist critics who were conscious of this complexity is small. The German socialist Franz Mehring showed a certain feel for the particular quality of art. It allowed him the insight that late nineteenth century realism, so often socialistic in its emotions, was moving toward an esthetic dead end. The Russian Plekanov fell into some of the deadly simplifications which are so easy for the sociological impressionist, yet he too made his contribution. Leon Trotsky (whose main critical book, *Literature and Revolution,* was recently re-issued) demonstrated a very real sensitivity to the arts. He wrote, for example, that "verbal form is not a passive reflection of a preconceived artistic idea, but an active element which influences the idea itself. But such an active mutual relationship—in which form influences and at times entirely transforms content—is known to us in all fields of social and even biologic life."

More recently, Christopher Caudwell, the young Communist who died in action during the Spanish Civil War, has achieved a certain reputation, mainly because he was for some time practically the only Marxist literary critic available in America who demonstrated the least sensitivity to the enormous complexity of the relation between art and social life. Yet, paradoxically, Caudwell will suffer as the work of Hauser and others reveals a more profound tradition. With all of his brilliance, he was still capable of a chart of English literature with incredibly schematic equations—like that of the Elizabethan theater and the rise of bourgeois individualism. Arnold Kettle, an English Communist now teaching at Leeds, is, for example, a much more subtle and sophisticated critic than Caudwell. He can write with sympathy and brilliance of Henry James, for instance.

BUT THE most important single Marxist literary theorist now living cannot possibly be dealt with in a brief survey reference. He is George Lukacs, one of the most brilliant and perhaps tragic figures of our time. Lukacs began as a precocious neo-Kantian (he early attracted the attention of Thomas Mann), then became a Hegelian, and finally, in the aftermath of World War I, a Communist and a Marxist. His most famous book, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein,* was denounced by the Communist International in the early twenties. At that point, Lukacs made his first capitulation, and established his pattern of surrendering to Communist dictatorship at almost every crucial moment.

Yet even during his long surrender to Stalinism, Lukacs managed to smuggle the contraband of his genius past the literary censors. With his tongue fairly bursting through his cheek he would heap fulsome praise upon Stalin for some theoretical "discovery" (usually the great achievement was the statement of an extremely simple and shopworn idea), and then go on with his criticism in a fashion which completely contradicted the Stalinist orthodoxy. Thus, for example, he was able to point to the common experience of realism and the avant garde and to argue that the Communist writer had much to learn from the decadent West.

In 1956, Lukacs participated in the Hungarian Revolution, was one of the intellectual leaders of the pre-revolutionary ferment, and took refuge with Imre Nagy. Since then, he has once more made his peace with the regime, and is currently working in Budapest. His work is extremely difficult to place in the major tradition of Marxist criticism, because so many of his opinions are dictated by his political capitulations. And yet, when all is said and done, he is probably the most significant literary theorist in the history of Marxism. If Hauser's *Social History of Art* is the most important historical-critical work of this school, then Lukacs is its preeminent philosopher.

There are other Marxist critics of merit—some of the English intellectuals, for instance. But the main point should be clear by now: in the hundred and ten-year history of Marxism, there is a significant, usable body of literary analysis which has nothing in common with vulgar determinism. This is the tradition in which Hauser must be located; it is the tradition which Hauser's study should call to our attention.

It is impossible to outline in brief the approach of such an extensive tradition. Yet a few major points can be noted. Literary criticism, to begin, often proceeds on a basis of either/or. Either the work is to be

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considered as a formal and symbolic structure which is completely self-contained, or it is to be taken as a function of social or psychological facts external to it. For Hauser, and the best of the Marxist critics, the point of departure is to deny this disjunction. The poem or novel or play is a social product, that is, it is written by an author who stands in a time and place and many facts about it can only be understood in this context. But at the same time art is precisely that which lifts itself above the average, the *zeitgeist;* its claim upon our imagination and mind is that it has found the material of a unique vision in the common experience. James Joyce, for instance, will be much better understood when it is noted that his sense of recurrence, of eternal return, is of a piece with a general European mood which developed in the twentieth century; James Joyce will not be understood at all unless one sees that his shaping of this mood was personal and particular. This is why his books survive the passing of the social emotions which they both express and transcend.

THIS conception was recently subjected to knowing criticism. In his *Culture and Society,* Raymond Williams wrote that the Marxist critic tends to become unMarxian as he moves away from vulgar determinism, that the assertion of the semi-autonomy of the creative arts deprives the social critic of his most fundamental assumption, of the *ultimate* decisiveness of the material and economic factor in social life. This charge has some merit, yet I think it misses a conscious ambiguity, an intended tension, which is integral to the method of the Marxist critic. Like Hauser, the social analyst is constantly discovering a dialectic movement. When he takes one term of that movement, in this case the sphere of art, he will almost necessarily emphasize the factors of semi-autonomy, personal genius, the role of tradition and so on. Moreover, he will not discover final and systematic formulations because of the recognized imprecision of relationship between art and social life.

It can be argued, of course, that such a general formation of the situation deprives the critic of any claim to be specifically Marxist, i.e., any critic could attempt this kind of synthesis so long as he admits of *some* relationship between the imagination and society. In the abstract, this is true enough, and it is expressive of the way in which so many Marxian insights have become the general property of Western intellectual life. Yet historically it is not quite so simple. The Marxists. like Hauser and Lukacs, have had the advantage of a much more specific theory; they have given a certain richness to terms such as "dialectic," and this has enabled them to do some of the most important work in the field.

But beyond this, there is another aspect of the Marxist literary theory which is of great importance: the ultimate conception of art which it implies. For the orthodox Communist—of the Khrushchev as well as of the Stalin era—the work of art is viewed primarily as a political fact. Thus the totalitarian insensitivity toward a book like *Doctor Zhivago.* For the formalist, beauty becomes something of an esoteric abstraction, a functionless charm. But for Hauser and those of his tradition, the analytic synthesis leads to an important conception of the humanity of beauty, of its relation to our lives: "Even if it is true that we have to loosen our hold upon reality to a certain extent in order to fall under the spell of art, it is no less true that all genuine art leads us by a detour, which may be longer or shorter, back to reality in the end."

This notion is under attack from all sides in our time. On the one hand there are those who would parody it by seeing art as directly leading to reality, who do not understand the "detour." On the other, there are those who would deny the return to reality, who would make art so self-contained that it is unapproachable, a God-like aseity which is the achievement of men. It is possible to reach Hauser's conclusion by other roads (Maritain does in *Art and the Creative Intuition),* but it is the mark of the worth of Hauser's tradition that, at its best, it has always stood for this human conception of beauty.

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Strange, Romantic Novella

PSYCHÉ 59. By Françoise des Ligneris. Translated by Sigrid Rock. Criterion Books. $3.50.

By GEOFFREY WAGNER

FOR THOSE interested in the poetic novel, this marks the début of an interesting French writer. Born at Louzat (Allier), a brilliant philosophy student, and now, in her middle years, living in Paris as the wife of a retired Naval Admiral, Mlle. des Ligneris is the author over the past decade of roughly a dozen novels, all of which have a peculiar cachet, and some of which achieve genuine literary distinction.

Among her novels the best are *Bijoux* (Mercure de France), *Olympia* (Editions de Minuit), and —her big success—*Fort Frédérick* (Grasset), which last I unsuccessfully attempted to introduce into a number of American publishing houses a year ago. And to my chagrin I am compelled now to admit that her especial flavor does not come across very well in translation.

All her novels are Colette-like novellas, and the experience in most divides between Paris (as real world) and some large, Gothic château (as world of the imagination). The author is much more impressive within the latter milieu; moreover, *Psyché 59* is early des Ligneris. A later novella was issued by Staples in London but failed to catch on sufficiently to get imported here.

The present work, by which she is introduced to the American public, is unusually full of conventional elements—a husband falling for his sister-in-law, loss of eyesight in a car crash, a rivals' walk by teetering cliffs, stereotypical children, and so on. The remarkable thing is that Mlle. de Ligneris' quality rises above these elements; unlike the usual esthetic novelist she does not first show her credentials, then disappoint. She does the reverse.

This novel retells the Psyche legend—with a twist. Apuleius' heroine here turns into Mahaut, a woman so in love with her Eros (called Eric, in fact) that she enjoys the subservience enjoined on her by blindness; the husband Eric (already reproved by *Publishers' Weekly*) insists on her leaving all doors open, "a regulation that left Mahaut perpetually aware of the absolute control he exercised over *her* personality." What's more, he fetters her with a chain bracelet; as one of their children remarks, "You should put it around both wrists."

Yes, indeed. The des Ligneris romance tends to fascinate by the agony of Tantalus, not to say the magic of Sacher-Masoch; yet beside such distractions (including transvestism in *Fort Frédérick*), the mythic quality she establishes in the rural scenes has a truly pure imaginative unity. In the first half Mahaut is blind while her rivals see; the second half reverses this, adding a scene reminiscent of Nabokov's *Laughter in the Dark*, except that the French authoress adds a twist.

On the periphery of the story an occultist grandmother (des Ligneris likes to play with ancestral ties) is clearly derided for her departure from true faith, while the conclusion finds Mahaut liberated from the absolutes of emotion by exorcising the demon of sensuality. Her sister, Roberte, is a now dated character, the post-war French adolescent, the "immediate" Ivich of Sartre, or the very impulsive Xavière or Nadine of Mlle. Simone de Beauvoir.

If *Psyché 59* is inferior des Ligneris, *Fort Frédérick* remains the real thing, the story of a young aristocrat imprisoning an escaped rapist called Gédéon in her château; she contracts, briefly, a *marriage blanc* in Paris, only to return to Gédéon, the stimulus of her imagination and the source of her values. Both books are, in any case, quite serious and courageous, and to be valued as such.

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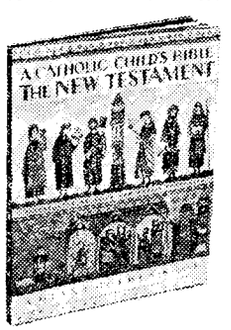

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Anti-Existentialist

MODERN GLOOM AND CHRISTIAN HOPE. By Hilda Graef. Regnery. $3.50.

By LEONARD F. X. MAYHEW

MISS Graef's thesis is that there is entirely too much gloom about these days, as witness some of our most influential authors. As Christians, she contends, we must oppose such a trend, since hope is one of the theological virtues and despair is a sin. She has a point, certainly, and on occasion she comes close to a reasoned approach to the texts she has selected, but each time, without exception, she veers off onto a tangent or to the repetition of a slogan. She seems to have neglected to define for herself either the causes and significance of "modern gloom" or the meaning of "Christian hope" with its very specified object. She sometimes attempts, therefore, to answer purely philosophical questions with theological answers and, equally bad, to judge a poet or novelist as if he had necessarily to mirror the entire philosophical or theological system which may in part have inspired him. In all this confusion, what she has to say that is valid and important becomes obscured.

For one brief moment in evaluating her "prophets of gloom" Miss Graef does come close to something of real importance and interest. She realizes that the rise of existentialist thought was centered in countries where the two world wars did the greatest human damage and where the established churches had all but lost their influence. She realizes also that in existentialist philosophy there is a "core of perverted Christianity." But she fails to follow these leads in order to develop a constructive and reasoned attitude in the face of modern philosophical pessimism.

Once she has disposed of Messrs. Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre, and added for good measure Albert Camus and Jean Anouilh to her prophets of gloom, the author devotes some time to the distaff side of her sad menagerie. Simone de Beauvoir and Françoise Sagan fall under her bludgeon, as would anyone whose errors are attributed to a combination of Jansenism, Platonism, Calvinism, anti-Christianity, ignorance and/or malice.

We do not, however, reach the real heart of Miss Graef's lament until we come to her evaluation of three Catholic authors who have fallen into the dread pit of existentialist pessimism: Gabriel Marcel, François Mauriac and Graham Greene. She devotes her longest chapters and most dogged efforts to discover where they have erred from that point of view which she has claimed as her own. Treating the subtle and beautiful thought of M. Marcel, Miss Graef notes that his *Homo Viator* is significantly subtitled "Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope." She quotes from various works of this philosopher and succeeds in proving the appropriateness of this title. But what happens to her thesis unless this unabashed Christian existentialist can be found out in error? So, she proceeds to attacks which range from the mild charge that Marcel's approach to God is "untraditional" to the incredible point of labeling him a "Gnostic" and, it would appear, a semi-Pelagian as well. She ends her treatment on an ambiguous note with several questions which, she states, will "show" that Catholic and existentialist thought cannot be reconciled and hastens on to join battle with Mauriac.

With Mauriac the author is up against something entirely different, apparently without realizing it. After all, Marcel is a philosopher and his doctrine should be cohesive and patient of even the most hair-splitting examination. But Mauriac is an artist, by very definition selective of some definite aspect of reality in which he perceives and through which he reveals a particular intuition of something true and beautiful. Mauriac has one grand and terrible vision of the community of evil and the absurdity of the finite which he forces inexorably on the attention of a world and a race all too anxious to be com-

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placent and unaware. Far from betraying his Faith, it is precisely because as a Christian he sees the reality of grace and the horror we are without it that he cannot rest from his labor of trying to shock us awake. Miss Graef admits none of this and performs a laboriously painstaking and absolutely literal exegesis to prove that Mauriac depicts an "unreal" and "unconvincing" world. Once again doctrinal and moral labels are freely distributed, the favorites being Jansenism, Calvinism and uncharitableness.

With Graham Greene we reach some sort of climax. Miss Graef begins by naming his heresy—Lutheranism, this time. She continues with a gloss which flits from one novel to another and back again without much pattern until she fastens upon the single word "leap" in *The End of the Affair,* invokes the gloomy spirit of Kierkegaard, and "surprisingly enough, we are back at the beginning of this book." In the end of Miss Graef's thesis was her beginning.

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We Go Pogo

TEN EVER-LOVIN' BLUE EYED YEARS WITH POGO. By Walt Kelly. Simon and Schuster. $4.95.

By NORA MAGID

I OBVIOUSLY have particular reason to be grateful to Walt Kelly, who has twice commemorated me, so to speak, in song. The lovely lines, "Nora's freezin' on the trolley," and "O roar a roar for Nora" are indelibly engraved on my consciousness. But now that it is almost time again to gather round the festive bowl and raise our voices in such hardy perennials as "Deck Us All with Boston Charlie" and "Good King Sourkraut Looked Out On His Feets Uneven," all aficionados of the Okefenokee Swamp will surely rejoice that Kelly has made a selection out of ten years—can it be?—of Pogo, and issued the official anniversary volume. It seems only yesterday that we were saying to one another, did you read about Cinderoola, or the pup that barks Ralph?

As uninhibitedly inventive with language as he is gifted a draftsman, Kelly furnishes in this collection not only the continuing story of Pogo in Pogo's world, but also verbal asides—historical, political, and self-critical, pointing for instance to his own motivations, occasional inconsistencies, and even lapses of memory. Basically, his platform is that "these things that make us human are always, curiously enough, close at hand. Resolve then, that on this very ground, with small flags waving and tinny blasts on tiny trumpets, we may meet the enemy, and not only may he be ours, he may be us." But those who have been with the strip from the start will regret that Kelly has passed up much of early vintage Pogo for later more topical material.

Mr. Kelly's newest Pogo book would have been more thoroughly gratifying had he kept in mind the other half of his programme—to have fun and make money at the same time, and to have nothing

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more concrete stashed away in the wings than the poking of gentle malice at foibles and pretensions, and the enjoying of such happy pleasures as food and fun and family. Actually, the more weighty sequences, while moral and admirable, simply are not as absurd; nor do they wear as well as the ones that featured, for instance, the indignant birds that wore little towels to shield themselves from the prying eyes of organized birdwatchers; or the magnificent cow that meowed so convincingly that it sold itself on the idea that it was a cat and went west to hunt mice at Fort Mudge; or the bug that was driven to distraction by the busybodies that constantly yodelled the ladybug song at him. He was, it turned out, a bachelor bug by trade.

But this is carping. *Ten Ever-Lovin' Blue Eyed Years* belongs on the Americana book-shelf, somewhere between *Krazy Kat* and *Charlie Brown.*

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The Shape of Things

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON'S incomparable Archive Production history-of-music project continues with its fourteenth release, now available in stereo as well as monophonic form. The present release (ARC 73122-33) includes five Bach albums and one each of Handel, Rameau and Schutz. Harpsichordist Ralph Kirkpatrick is featured on four of the Bach albums—playing the six partitas and the first and second concertos. He is abetted in the latter by the Lucerne Festival Strings led by Rudolf Baumgartner. Kirkpatrick executes his assignment meticulously but not mechanically, and there seems no sonic advantage in presenting the partitas in stereo. The final Bach disc contains a completely played Toccata and Fugue in D minor; Trio Sonatas 1 and 6; Prelude and Fugue in C by the famed blind organist Helmut Walcha. Stereo reduced the weight of the organ and yielded cleaner definition.

The Handel album includes the Utrecht *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* and the coronation anthem from Zadok the Priest. Geraint Jones leads the Geraint Jones Singers and Orchestra but their combined knowing efforts are largely negated by maudlin soloists; the opening tenor statement of *Jubilate* is one of the most labored things ever committed to microgroove.

Elisabeth Verlooy sings the three Rameau solo cantatas (*Orphée, Diana et Acteon* and *L'Impatience*) with assurance, control and slightly blurred enunciation.

The Schutz disc furnishes unalloyed pleasure. It is fourteen motets from his Geistliche Chormusik, performed by the Norddeutscher Singkries under Gottfried Wolters. The Deutsche Grammophon people are still enamored with the separation potential of stereo—in this recording the separation is so extreme the effect is one of antiphonal choirs rather than a single body of singers. (Later D.G. recordings have corrected this lapse; directionality being treated as only one of several stereo virtues, and then only a virtue when coordinated with the others.)

* * *

The old Unicorn "Messiah" has been re-released on the Kapp label. It is a good "domestic" production and boasts of some fine singing by soprano Adele Addison and dignified direction by Thompson Stone. Sidney, Lloyd, Gramm, the Zimbler Sinfonietta and Handel and Haydn Society complete the ensemble. Listeners are advised to investigate the Bernstein (Columbia) or Scherchen (Westminster) "Messiah," or to wait for the Beecham (Victor) or new Scherchen performances about to be released.

The Bach Guild's eagerly awaited "St. Matthew Passion" is a disappointment. Mogen Woldike's conception of this mighty drama is bloodless. His Vienna Chamber Choirs sound extremely thin. And the soloists, with the exception of Hilde Rissl-Majdan, all operate at a rather mean level of competence. The indictment extends to such luminaries as Walter Berry, Waldemar Kmentt and Teresa Stich-Randall. Uno Ebrelius's offhand, occasionally flatted interpretation of the Evangelist must rank as the poorest performance to mar the enviable Bach Guild reputation. The old Scherchen and the new Richter performances (Westminster and Archive respectively) are preferred; and the forthcoming Heilbronn-directed edition (Westminster) should be heard.

Last year, the Metropolitan Opera successfully revived Verdi's "Macbeth" and Victor, which has apparently entered into a contractual arrangement with the Met (filling the vacuum left some years ago by Columbia), has recorded the

REVIEWERS

Geoffrey Wagner, who teaches at City College in New York, is a novelist and critic.

Father Leonard F. X. Mayhew is a parish priest serving in Atlanta, Georgia.

Nora Magid is a member of the staff of *The Reporter.*

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* * *

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